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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Letter dated 28 February 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the texts of the declarations and plans of action adopted by the Parliamentary Meeting and the International Civil Society Forum for Democracy on the occasion of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Doha from 29 October to 1 November 2006 (see annexes).

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/281 of 9 February 2004, the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies was organized by the Government of Qatar, the host country, in cooperation with the United Nations. Over 100 States Members participated in the Conference, as did parliamentarians and civil society organizations representing 69 countries and 100 organizations, respectively.

The Sixth International Conference had two main objectives: to enhance the linkages between democracy, peace and social progress in the global development agenda and to initiate a systematic implementation and follow-up steps to consolidate the achievements and recommendations emanating from the previous significant International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies which began in 1988 (Manila, 1988; Managua, 1994; Bucharest, 1997; Cotonou, 2000; Ulaanbaatar, 2003).

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated for information as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 157.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I to the letter dated 28 February 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies

Doha, 29 October-1 November 2006

Declaration

We, members of parliament, meeting in Doha on the occasion of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, hereby adopt the following Declaration:

i. *Having discussed* at length the contribution of parliaments to democracy and *reaffirming* the central role of dialogue, tolerance and freedom of expression in democracy,

ii. *Reiterating* our commitment to the Declaration adopted by the Parliamentary Forum on the occasion of the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies held in Ulaanbaatar in September 2003,

iii. *Reaffirming* the fundamental principles and values of democracy, which are freedom, participation, human rights and the rule of law, principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and *reaffirming* the continued validity of that Declaration,

iv. *Convinced* that while democracy has to take into account the specific context of each society, the above-mentioned principles and values are universal in scope and are therefore non-negotiable,

v. *Reiterating* the central role of parliament in the promotion of democracy, since parliament, as the freely-elected body of representatives of the people, expresses their will and articulates their interests in order to guarantee their welfare. In this connection, *reaffirming* that democracy goes hand in hand with human rights and development, and that it must contribute to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustainable human development for all,

vi. *Affirming* that democracy can only thrive in an atmosphere of tolerance and dialogue where there is mutual respect for each other's opinions and values; and that parliament must play its role as the crucible for the mediation of the conflicting interests of society, the resolution of conflicts and the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation,

vii. *Reiterating* the need to ensure that decision-making processes are inclusive and representative and that all sectors of society, especially women, have a reasonable opportunity to participate and make their opinions known. In this context, *stressing* the particular importance of ensuring genuine participation of both men and women in political processes and the need to involve opposition parties, youth, disadvantaged groups as well as people with disabilities in the governance process,

viii. *Considering* that parliaments should play their role as guardians of human rights and strive to ensure that public policies are respectful of these rights. For parliaments to be effective in this regard, it is important that the rights of their individual members are protected from arbitrariness,

ix. *Noting* the substantial progress made around the world towards achieving democracy and building a culture of democracy, *welcoming* these developments, especially in the Arab region, *encouraging* further progress, and *pledging* to work together to foster a culture in which everyone enjoys the right and freedom to participate in the management of the affairs of their society,

x. *Gravely concerned* at the spread of various threats to human security, including terrorism, which subvert democracy worldwide, *undertaking* to contribute actively towards efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of terrorism, and *stressing* that the military response to terrorism is inadequate, and that governments should adopt and implement policies that foster dialogue and encourage the participation of all, especially marginalized groups, in mainstream political processes. *Also condemning* all forms of human rights abuses in the name of combating terrorism, and *reaffirming* that freedom of speech must not be used to propagate hate speech and fuel conflict,

xi. *Emphasizing* that the security sector, including the police and armed forces, should be under civilian control and should operate in a transparent and accountable manner, and *reiterating* the role and duty that parliaments have to oversee the operations of these forces in order to ensure accountability and protect citizens from abuse,

xii. *Further emphasizing* that for the institutions of governance to serve the interests of the people, they must devise mechanisms to keep in touch with the people. For parliaments, this means that parliamentarians should devise various ways, including effective constituency outreach and public hearings, not only to inform the people on parliament's work, but also to encourage their inputs into parliamentary proceedings,

xiii. *Mindful* that the media and civil society also play a crucial role in ensuring that governance processes are democratic, open and accountable, and *undertaking* to establish and/or strengthen legislative frameworks that allow for effective inputs by civil society in the work of governing institutions, especially parliaments. Adequate space has to be given to the media to inform the national community of public policies and action with a view to greater transparency and accountability. In this respect, *stressing* the need for the adoption of freedom of information legislation in our various countries, and *encouraging* the media to perform their function in a responsible manner and to refrain from serving as a conduit for the spread of values that run counter to democracy,

xiv. *Recognizing* that information and communication technologies are increasingly contributing to the development of governance processes that are both open and effective, and *encouraging* the harnessing of the potential offered by these technologies in order to improve service delivery and open access by the people to political processes,

xv. *Reaffirming* that parliaments must also play a strong role in bridging the democracy gap in international relations. This means that parliaments should monitor international negotiations, monitor enforcement of decisions adopted by governments at the international level and ensure compliance with international norms and the rule of law. Parliaments must also scrutinize effectively the activities of international organizations and provide inputs into their deliberations,

xvi. *Recognizing* that for parliaments to play their role effectively, a number of basic conditions have to be met:

- They should be properly empowered through constitutional and other legal frameworks;
- They should be representative of all citizens and include representatives from all sectors of society;
- Their members should be able to express themselves and act independently - free from arbitrary constraints;
- They must be sufficiently informed of the issues on which they are called upon to take decisions;
- They must have sufficient resources, both human and material. In this context, the importance of financial and administrative autonomy for parliaments cannot be overemphasized. They should have an independent budget and staff and should manage these resources according to the strictest standards of integrity and accountability;

1. *Pledge* to abide by the principles set forth in the present Declaration and, in particular, the principles of dialogue, tolerance and freedom of expression as fundamental cornerstones of democracy.

2. *Undertake* to work for a more effective contribution of our parliaments to democracy worldwide. In this connection, *cognizant* of the need for our parliaments to be more representative, accessible, accountable and transparent, and the need to devise or strengthen internal procedures and mechanisms that make our parliaments more effective nationally and internationally, *congratulate* the Inter-Parliamentary Union on action taken to follow up on the Ulaanbaatar Declaration, notably the publication of the guide on *Parliament and democracy in the twentieth century: A guide to good practice*; *undertake* to be inspired by the good practices identified in this publication in our bid to make our parliaments evermore effective;

3. *Note* that parliaments, especially those in the new and emerging democracies, need assistance in meeting the challenges mentioned above, *encourage* therefore donors to continue to support capacity-building programmes for these parliaments, *stress* the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation as a means of fostering the exchange of experiences and good practices, and *encourage* the IPU to continue its efforts to strengthen parliaments as pillars of democracy and to take the lead in coordinating information on such assistance in order to encourage synergies and avoid overlapping;

4. *Pledge* our parliaments' determination to continue working together, *offer* mutual assistance in coping with our common challenges, and *undertake* to continue to engage with governments, international organizations and civil society in our common endeavour to promote democracy;

5. *Express our thanks* to the Government and the Advisory Council of the State of Qatar for organizing this Parliamentary Meeting, and *further thank* the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union for their substantive contribution to the organization and conduct of the Meeting;

6. *Request* the Speaker of the Advisory Council to convey the present Declaration to the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to convey it to the appropriate authorities as part of the official proceedings of the Conference;

7. *Request* that this Declaration be brought to the attention of all Speakers of parliaments and *encourage* them to take steps towards its implementation;

8. *Decide* to follow up on the present Declaration by taking the measures outlined in the Plan of Action.

Plan of Action

We, representatives of parliaments gathered at the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Doha, Qatar, from 29 October to 2 November 2006, having adopted the preceding Declaration affirming the role of parliament as the central institution of democracy, hereby adopt the following Plan of Action. We undertake to encourage our respective parliaments to take the necessary steps to implement the measures contained in this Plan of Action. In so doing, we are cognizant of the fact that for parliaments to play their role effectively in promoting and strengthening democracy, they must ensure that their own processes are in conformity with the universally accepted principles and standards of democracy. This entails working evermore actively towards making our parliaments more representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

We undertake to encourage our respective parliaments to strive for the following five key characteristics:

1. Representative parliaments

1.1. Work towards the establishment and/or strengthening of free and fair electoral processes that ensure equitable representation of all sectors of society, especially groups that are currently under-represented,

1.2. Ensure fair and inclusive parliamentary procedures, which give full opportunity to all members, including the opposition/minority parties, women and other marginalized groups to participate effectively in parliament's work; these groups should be equitably represented in the governance structures of the parliament,

1.3. Afford adequate protection to all parliamentarians in the performance of their functions, including through the enforcement of a system of immunities and privileges necessary to protect parliament and its members from arbitrariness, both during and following the parliamentary mandate,

1.4. Encourage the organization of parliament's business in an impartial and non-partisan manner,

1.5. Take special measures, where necessary, to establish structures and processes that in particular promote women's participation in political processes and promote gender equality in society as a whole.

2. Transparent parliaments

2.1. Take steps to ensure that journalists and the media in general can report on the work of parliament,

2.2. Establish and/or strengthen legislation that provides adequate protection to the media in this regard while encouraging it to perform its functions in a responsible manner that is respectful of the rights of all; take the necessary measures to prevent the media from spreading hate speech and encouraging intolerance; encourage plurality of ownership of and independence of the media,

2.3. Guarantee citizens the right to access information held by public bodies, especially through the enactment and implementation of freedom of information legislation,

2.4. Adopt appropriate strategies for informing the public about the work of parliament (television, radio, Internet, mobile phones); take special measures to inform young people and stimulate their interest in the work of parliament.

2.5. Take all other necessary measures to improve public confidence in parliament as a democratic institution,

2.6. Promote the use of information and communications technologies to enhance the effectiveness of parliamentary processes and thereby foster transparency and accountability.

3. Accessible parliaments

3.1. Devise appropriate mechanisms for facilitating direct contact between citizens and their representatives (establishment of constituency offices, organization of report-back sessions with constituents, etc.),

3.2. Encourage citizens' involvement in the legislative process, for example by publishing draft laws on the parliamentary website and organizing public hearings; encourage the media to give wide publicity to parliamentary business.

4. Accountable parliaments

4.1. Adopt and enforce a public code of conduct for parliamentarians.

5. Effective parliaments

At the national level:

5.1. Take all necessary steps to assert parliament's independence from the executive. These include an independent budget, staff and information resources, and parliament's control of its own timetable,

5.2. Ensure that adequate facilities are made available to all members, including those belonging to opposition/minority parties and women's groups,

5.3. Ensure that the various parliamentary committees are properly resourced and have the requisite powers to put questions to and obtain answers from members of the executive.

At the international level:

5.4. Oversee the activities of the government in the conduct of its external relations, in strict respect of the respective prerogatives of the executive and the parliament; in this connection, seek information, on a regular basis, from government on its policies and negotiating positions,

5.5. Establish a clear legal framework for the involvement of parliament in international affairs,

5.6. Encourage the participation of parliamentarians in government delegations to international organizations,

5.7. Participate actively in international parliamentary organizations with a view to promoting parliamentary diplomacy in fostering political dialogue for conflict resolution,

5.8. Monitor the functioning of international organizations and seek, including through governments, to ensure that the policies and decisions of these bodies are in conformity with democratic principles and standards.

6. Follow-up mechanisms

We propose that the following parliamentary mechanisms be established to follow up on the recommendations contained in the Plan of Action:

6.1. The decision-making structures that were responsible for organizing the Parliamentary Meeting should be reconstituted to serve until the Seventh International Conference of New or Restored Democracies as an advisory body called the Parliamentary Meeting - Democracy Advisory Commission (PM-DAC). The membership of this body should be restructured and broadened to make it more representative and provide it with the necessary expertise to deal with democracy-related matters.

6.2. Responsibility for organizing PM-DAC should be entrusted to the Advisory Council of Qatar, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the convenors of the Parliamentary Meeting of the Sixth ICNRD. The IPU Secretariat could be entrusted with responsibility for serving as the interim Secretariat of the PM-DAC.

6.3. The PM-DAC shall:

6.3.1. Provide substantive advice on projects and activities designed to ensure effective follow up to the Parliamentary Meeting and the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies as far as parliaments are concerned,

6.3.2. In recognition of ongoing democratic progress in the Arab/Middle East region, develop special projects to encourage the improvement of systems of parliamentary governance,

6.3.3. Assist in developing a diagnostic tool to help parliaments assess their own practice against the recommendations of the Parliamentary Meeting, and identify areas for improvement,

6.3.4. Advise on and develop projects to encourage the participation of women in political processes in general and ensure gender equality in governance, including in the parliamentary field,

6.3.5. Provide advice on ways and means of ensuring that parliaments are fully representative,

6.3.6. Contribute to the development of internationally recognized standards for good parliamentary governance, in association with international and regional parliamentary associations and the United Nations,

6.3.7. Monitor and report on progress in the implementation by parliaments of the Plan of Action,

6.3.8. Promote synergy between the Parliamentary Meeting and the governmental and civil society components of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

6.4. The PM-DAC should be part of the overall follow-up mechanism of the Sixth ICNRD and the host country will be required to take steps to mobilize resources for its functioning and

activities; the PM-DAC should, in principle, meet at least twice a year and will be convened by its Chairperson. The first meeting of the PM-DAC will be convened by the IPU.

6.5. The Plan of Action of the Parliamentary Meeting should form part of the Plan of Action of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly by the Government of the State of Qatar.

Annex II to the letter dated 28 February 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

International Civil Society Forum for Democracy

Doha, 29 October-1 November 2006

Declaration and Plan of Action

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VI. Expressions of gratitude

I. Introduction

1. We, 160 civil society democracy advocates and practitioners from 90 countries from around the world, met in Doha, capital of the State of Qatar on 29 October – 1 November 2006 as International Civil Society Forum for Democracy (ICSFD 2006)[1]. The forum, held under the overarching theme "Democracy is the Road to Peace", was the civil society component of the evolving tripartite international process to promote democracy at the national, regional and international level, known as the ICNRD-led process.

2. International Civil Society Forum-2003 (ICSF-2003) was held in September 2003 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on the decision of the Follow-up Mechanism of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies as part of preparations for the Fifth Conference(ICNRD-5). The forum's aim was to prepare civil society contributions to ICNRD-5 as well as promote partnerships and strengthen commitments to

[1] In February 2004 ICSF International Steering Committee decided to change the name of the Forum into International Civil Society Forum for Democracy (ICSFD), so as to underline its main objective and field of activity.

democratic governance locally, nationally and internationally. The forum produced a substantial set of recommendations addressed respectively to civil society organizations, governments and parliaments as well as to international organizations and the donor community. It also produced recommendations addressed to the participants of ICNRD-5 held immediately after ICSF-2003 that formed the basis of subsequent cooperation between the two international pro-democracy movements.

3. ICSFD has since become a recognized civil society partner of the ICNRD-led process[2] and is working together with governments and parliaments of the participating states of the ICNRD-led processes in implementing its decisions as well as monitoring its implementation.

4. Preparatory meetings for ICSFD 2006 have been held in various regions, including in Asia (in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 28-30 June 2006), Arab preparatory meeting (in Doha, Qatar on 17-18 June 2006), that assessed the state of democratic changes and reforms in those regions, shared and exchanged experiences, assessed implementation of the decisions of ICSF-2003 and adopted sets of recommendations addressed to ICSFD-2006.

5. ICSFD, as a global civil society movement, has the following main mission:

   a) To foster, strengthen, expand civil society's role at the national, regional and international level in promoting democratic reforms and their consolidation; to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the democratization processes at all levels from the perspective of civil society;

   b) To identify challenges to and opportunities for democracy-building at various levels, particularly strengthening civil society's role in the processes of democratic institutionalization and consolidation; support democracies facing threats or assaults on democracy;

   c) To participate in, establish minimum standards for, and monitor the implementation of, the relevant decisions of the ICNRD-led processes;

   d) To develop effective strategies for collective action to advance democratic processes, regionally and internationally, including by providing support and advice to regional and national civil society organizations in establishing democracy watch mechanisms that take into consideration the social dimension; and

   e) To promote cooperation and partnership relations with parliaments, governmental organizations, United Nations bodies, international processes, as well as with civil society organizations and social movements, in the pursuit of democratic reforms, transformations and promotion of democratic values and their consolidation.

6. Having met in Qatar, exchanged information and shared experience in making democratic changes or consolidating democratic reforms, and having discussed with representatives of governments and parliaments, we have identified the following as the values and principles, priorities of democratic changes, and tasks and challenges that lie ahead:

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[2] The General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution of May 2, 2006 specifically ..."welcome(d) the comprehensive tripartite character (governments, parliaments, civil society) of the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which will allow for greater interaction and cooperation in the common effort of promoting democracy". See resolution 60/253.

II. Values and Principles

7. We reaffirm the values and principles reflected in the Declaration, Recommendations and Plan of Action of ICSF-2003 and call for their full implementation. In light of developments over the past three years, we further emphasize the following values and principles that are of particular relevance and importance today:

   a) Democracy is a universal value and good. It is being widely understood and recognized as the only legitimate form of governance. However, as international practice vividly demonstrates, democracy and democratic governance can be practiced in different forms depending on historical backgrounds and current socio-political and economic situations.

   b) Democracy is the realization of self-determination and cannot be imposed by force, by invasion or by foreign powers. Peace is a prerequisite for democratization

   c) Democratic order requires support of the outcome of free elections and the right of elected representatives to fulfill their functions.

   d) In the process of democratization the capacity building and empowerment of women in all societies is key to the realization of democracy as a societal reality.

   e) Democracy empowers citizens and offers checks and balances on government activities and possible abuse of office or power, promotes effective protection of human rights and the rule of law; it provides legitimacy to governments to govern the people and the society.

   f) Though democracy represents a strategic choice, it is an ever-evolving process that requires full commitment, engagement, shared responsibility and empowerment of all citizens.

   g) Democracy is a human and people's right. All citizens are entitled to democracy as an essential enabling environment and condition for full enjoyment of human rights. Alongside all other basic human rights, the right to participate in political decisions affecting citizens' lives and communities is indispensable; without the guarantee of this right, democracy would simply be rule by the majority, devoid of respect for the rights of minorities (ethnic, linguistic and sexual) and vulnerable groups including immigrants.

   h) Special attention and support should be paid to the issues of indigenous peoples and include their right to self-determination, their free, prior and informed consent, respect of their own identity and special rights, in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Indigenous Peoples.

   i) Cultural or other differences of a region cannot serve as insulation of that particular region and its peoples from the objective yearning for social and economic justice and personal freedom. There is no contradiction between the particularity of the region and application of principles of democracy based on citizenship and active participation.

   j) Democracy may be attained best through full and effective partnership between all the stakeholders that are committed to the noble ideals and goals of democracy, especially the government, civil society and parliament, a partnership that is based on mutual respect and full cooperation. Governments and parliaments need to work with civil society as their full indispensable partner, while the civil society needs to act beyond mere criticism of government, beyond a demand-oriented and service role that is limited to filling the gap left by government organizations, to serving as an active and effective partner in pursuit of national development, justice and social progress.

k) In the era of globalization, domestic, regional and global democratization processes are interlinked and mutually reinforcing; thus, these processes need to be promoted simultaneously.

l) While recognizing various forms of democratic governance, we believe that an effective and legitimate democratic governance requires, inter alia, the following:

- Freedom to live with dignity, full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms, and human security;
- Freedom of association, of assembly and of speech, including the use of information and communication technologies;
- Independence of the judiciary and the rule of law;
- Direct link between reform and democratization processes with political, civil as well as economic, social and cultural rights;
- Protection of minorities, indigenous and other vulnerable and marginalized groups; rejection of any intolerance;
- Non-discriminatory and equal opportunity for political, economic and social participation, including the participation of the youth;
- Transparency, accountability and free access to information;
- Free access to independent media and communication technology
- Free and fair elections as well as a functioning multi-party system;
- Commitment to protection of the environment and sustainable development;
- Gender equality, in particular political participation of women.

m) Engaging civil society actively in promoting democracy is essential for fulfilling the conditions mentioned in (l) above. Civil society plays a major role in facilitating dialogue between peoples and governments and also in representing the interests of marginalized groups. Civil society also helps to ensure viable policy options for governments as well as the latter's transparency and accountability;

n) Strengthening democratic governance in new and restored democracies requires that the private and corporate sectors carry their responsibilities and obligations related to humanrights, labour standards, transparency, and international law.

The private and corporate sectors should contribute to equitable and sustainable economic growth in new and restored democracies, in the absence of which democratic development is undermined.

o) Principles of democracy apply not only to national and local government, but should be applied as appropriate to intergovernmental organizations at the global and regional levels.

p) Foreign government partisan interventions in the elections of other nations are, in principle, not appropriate mechanisms for promoting democracy; and activities towards these ends by government-controlled and government-funded NGOs violate democratic principles.

III. Challenges and Opportunities to Democratization Process

1. The end of the cold war in the early 1990s gave further impetus to the democratization process; many autocratic, totalitarian and undemocratic regimes were peacefully swept from power by popular will and movements; elections became a major manifestation of popular choice. Positive examples of such democratic change are found in Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, South America and the Caribbean. As never before, millions of people have today a direct or indirect say in electing their government or selecting their rulers. However, in many cases democratic processes are limited to periodic elections only. Democratic institutions, be it political parties, the judiciary and security agencies, etc. are not fulfilling their intended roles in the society as envisaged by the people, while those elected to take up public office often rule as they choose, abusing the popular mandate. Hence democracies in many countries remain unstable and weak, which can be seen from reversals of some democratic reforms and changes. Furthermore, still a large portion of the world's population lives under authoritarian, despotic regimes, many of which are in a state of civil war with their own people or cannot cope with poverty and other social ills of the society. This shows that much still needs to be done.

2. Despite efforts to promote democracy and rule of law, grave deficits remain to be addressed. Among these we note that: unfair elections are still evident in many democracies; social and economic development fails to incorporate the people's interest and participation; many people are trapped in poverty, and this should not deprive them from exercising their citizens rights; corruption monitoring mechanisms are yet to be institutionalized; people's security still faces constant threats; democracy institutions at times do not function according to the principles laid out in international guidelines such as the 2003 Ulaanbaatar Declaration; continuing impunity has resulted in increased human rights violations in many parts of the world.

3. All the ideals of a genuine democracy and human rights still remain core challenges in many parts of the world, notably the right to self-determination (including indigenous peoples); the right to development; the right to participation; the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; freedom of belief; access to information; and gender equality.

   Many of these are reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations. All the aforementioned goals are attainable; however national and local governments and parliaments, as the United Nations Millennium Declaration specifically underlined, need to join hands with civil society to successfully attain these goals, to turn these challenges into opportunities for strengthening effective democratic governance.

4. By its very nature civil society is expected to play a crucial role as generator of policy options for governments, as service providers in the areas of their comparative advantage and expertise as well as the 'watchdog' of governments. It acts as a natural bridge between people in the communities and the state institutions. On the other hand, due to different historical, cultural and developmental factors, civil societies in different countries are also at different stages of formation, maturing and consolidation. In a number of countries civil society is not even legalized nor institutionalized, in flagrant violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In many cases civil society organizations suffer from lack of adequate human or financial resources, which at times lead to dependency on others, including donor organizations or state funding.

5. Therefore, it is imperative for governments and parliaments to maximize support and strengthen civil society, encourage and enhance close partnerships with civil society so as to secure stable development and democratic reforms. It is in this light that we see the emerging core trilateral partnership between governments, parliaments and civil society. On the international level, cooperation of international

governmental organizations is also essential. In this growing partnership, ICSFD, together with the ICNRD governmental mechanisms and the Parliamentarians' Forum, is prepared to play a coalition-building role.

6. In the face of the challenges mentioned above as well as to better chart broader partnership relations between governments, parliaments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations, donor community and other stakeholders, it is important to call for a universal declaration in support of civil society by the United Nations General Assembly[3]. Hence ICSFD needs to work closely with national, regional and other international civil society organizations as well as with the other partners of ICNRD to promote this strategic goal as consolidating the increasing role of civil society, contributing to democratization at all levels and attaining the objectives of the MDGs.

7. At the regional level, there should also be more exchange of information and experience among civil society organizations, which will not only enrich the experiences in theories and practices of democratic reforms but would also enable civil society organizations to network and collaborate closely in promoting democratization at the regional level, raising voices in cases of assaults on democracy in one of the regional countries or in protection of pro-democracy movements therein.

8. At the national level, concrete steps need to be taken to strengthen the institutional capacity and develop horizontal linkages among civil society organizations, and raise their accountability to the public and the grassroots constituencies. Measures to enhance institutional capacity of civil society could include undertaking national studies on the state of civil society, their strengths and weakness, the obstacles and challenges that impede their development etc. Positive experiences of undertaking such studies, using for example CIVICUS' toolkit and methodology, could be very useful.

IV. Implementation of ICSF-2003

9. We believe that the Declaration, Recommendations and Plan of Action of ICSF-2003 are still relevant as a framework for collective reflection and action. However they need to be updated, taking into account the newly emerging challenges and opportunities since 2003.

10. We recognize that the implementation work so far carried out is far from being satisfactory, as many recommendations remain unfulfilled or unanswered. However, we appreciate the efforts by Mongolia to implement some of the recommendations of the Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action of ICRND-5 through pilot projects such as elaboration of nationally developed 'Country Information Notes', 'Democratic Governance Indicators', and 'National Plan of Action for strengthening democracy" as well as the development of the national 'Civil Society Index'. We note, however, that few other countries so far have made similar efforts or reported on them.

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[3] The universal declaration could be based partially on the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, the Secretary-General's and international civil society response to that report, decisions and recommendations of CONGO, CIVICUS and other international civil society organizations and their practice.

V. Recommendations and Call to Action

a) Recommendations for governments and parliaments

1. create, in consultation with civil society, an enabling environment for civil society, including the legal framework;

2. promote decentralization of government decision-making processes, support local self-governance and respect for the rule of law;

3. governments that have not done so should ratify international human rights treaties that support democracy as a human right and take the appropriate measures and actions to fulfill their obligations under these treaties;

4. set up or strengthen national and regional human rights mechanisms;

5. refrain from using the threat of terrorism to justify repressive practices;

6. improve the education system and curriculum to promote human rights education and active, participatory citizenship;

7. set up peace-building mechanisms to politically facilitate cooperation in resolving armed conflicts, strengthening national infrastructure for peace, as recommended in the United Nations Report of September 2006 on the prevention of armed conflict;

8. work with civil society organizations, including human rights organizations, to assess and improve the quality of democracy by developing national democracy governance indicators (DGIs), country information notes (CINs) and national plans of action (NPoA) to consolidate democracy, as specifically recommended by the ICNRD-5 Plan of Action;

9. promote multilateral cooperation to develop and foster democracy; strengthen democratic governance monitoring mechanisms;

10. take measures to involve more broadly civil society and the private sector in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

11. take measures to fulfill government commitments undertaken by the Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action, section 4 ("Regional Action"), in particular to adopt a regional democracy declaration or charter (4.2), to create a regional monitoring mechanism on human rights (4.10), to develop an assistance program for countries undergoing democratic transitions (4.5) and to promote regional cooperation against corruption (4.13).

12. when providing official development assistance (ODA), to promote human rights and democratic governance for the full realization of participatory democracy and sustainable development, as well as to ensure proper accountability of aid;

13. provide unhindered access by citizens to independent media and information communications technology, and facilitate the development of free and fair media, including newspapers, radio and television stations,

14. enact and implement legislative, administrative and other measures to effectively combat corruption;

15. implement gender-just policies based on principles of equality and non-discrimination as defined in the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). All member states of the United Nations should ratify and implement CEDAW;

16. governments and parliaments need to work closely with the United Nations, ICSFD and other civil society organizations to promote and consolidate democracy at the national, regional and international level;

17. ensure civilian control of the military;

18. enact and implement environmental protection measures for sustainable development;

19. ensure the democratic character of political parties and effective regulation of campaign finance;

20. recognize the standing of non-financial stakeholders in trade and financial disputes (not letting foreign investor rights supersede the domestic or natural rights of ethnic, regional, tribal or geographical national groups (indigenous and minorities)

21. end to all forms of human trafficking;

22. ensure the rights of internally displaced persons and refugees;

23. promote direct access of civil society organizations to government and state institutions and ensure that citizens have access to information held by public authorities, regardless of who produced the information.

24. We call upon the international community, governments and parliaments to respect the outcomes of the Palestinian people's will as expressed in the democratic process of the February 2006 election.

b) Recommendations for civil society

1. Civil society organizations need to become familiar with the existing public sector mechanisms so as to be able to engage effectively with these mechanisms.

2. to be effective, civil society organizations need to build institutional capacity, objectivity and political impartiality, develop horizontal linkages among themselves and preserve their autonomy from government, parliament, the private sector and donor community;

3. civil society should make itself responsive to the public and grassroots constituencies; and create, strengthen and nurture further partnership with governments and parliaments to enhance dialogue at national, regional and international levels;

4. make essential documents available in various languages in order to stimulate broad participation in policy discussions and improved communication

5. as civil wars disrupt social organizations and civil leadership, civil society needs to play a constructive role in preventing aremed conflict, developing peace accords and post-conflict peace-building. In this respect civil society organizations are encouraged to work to implement the global and regional action agenda adopted by t he Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in 2005.

6. advocate the democratization of UN institutions as part of the UN reform process

7. strengthen further the core tripartite partnership of governments, parliaments and civil society in promoting and/or deepening reforms in the spirit of the decisions of ICNRD-5 and ICNRD-6, ICSFD and the Parliamentarians' Forum (PF);

8. improve networking and coordination among civil society organizations engaged in democracy advocacy so as to closely monitor the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of ICNRD and the PF;

9. establish or strengthen further national and regional "democracy watch" networks, promote, where feasible, development of national tools of assessing the quality and breadth of democracy at the national level: the nationally owned democratic governance indicators (DGIs), country information notes (CINs) and national plans of action (NPoA) to consolidate democracy;

10 develop and/or strengthen regional or sub-regional democracy action networks to support democracy movements and advocates under threat and to demonstrate solidarity with and peoples facing democratic crisis or reversal;

11. civil society activities should complement democratic representative institutions (both national and local), as well as engaging in participatory democracy;

12. generate policy options for governments and parliaments;

13. increase opportunities and political space by linking up regionally and internationally, and lobbying intergovernmental organizations;

14. mobilize broad-based support to eradicate poverty and to implement the MDGs as well as monitor their implementation;

15. create, where appropriate, effective mechanisms to strengthen and deepen cooperation between government agencies and civil society organizations in promoting democracy and human rights as prescribed by the decisions of the ICNRD-led processes;

16. work to promote the culture of democracy and democratic consciousness through the formal and informal education and learning systems, the media, cultural activities, publications and electronic publishing;

17. ICSFD needs to initiate a process that would lead to the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of a universal declaration in support of the role of civil society in democratic processes and global governance.

18. Civil society organizations need to develop their cpapcities to generate resources raeadily available in their communities as well as attract resources from public funds and inter- gouvernmental organizations.

19. civil society priorities should include empowering grassroots and advancing the rights of excluded and marginalized communities, and advocating the implementation of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;

20. advocate for the creation of independent media sources, and for unhindered access by citizens to them and to information communications technology

21. uphold intergenerational perspectives, including the views of youth;

22. promote women's participation in politics; production of shadow CEDAW national reports

23. promote "zero tolerance" against corruption and abuse of power;

24. proactively network with CSOs across sectors, including development

c) Recommendations for United Nations and other relevant international organizations

1. implement, in consultation with civil society organizations, the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on United Nations- Civil Society Relations (the Cardoso report) and subsequently advanced by the UN Secretary-General.

2. In view of the positive experience of the ICNRD tripartite approach in Doha with regard to building of democracies, it is recommended that the United Nations General Assembly, regional organizations and state parties consider the creation of permanent tripartite platforms which would be able to benefit from the shared vision, values and experience of governments, parliamentarians, and civil society indeveloping the societal and institutional capacities for democracy.

3. provide timely, appropriate and coherent support to governments and civil society organizations in their efforts to promote human rights, democracy, good governance and the capacity of citizens for democratic interaction.

4. improve the capacity of the United Nations to respond to the requests of civil society organizations to assist in their cpapcity-building and working with all appropriate United Nations bodies.

5. ensure that civil society organizations exercise their participatory rights in intergovern-mental processes.

6. improve the transparency of international organizations and international dispute-settling mechanism.

7. In the development of assistance plans civil society and the people should be involved in setting the priorities for the funding.

d) Recommendations for donor organizations and agencies

1. set up, where possible, regional democracy assistance foundations, that would proactively cooperate to assist democratization in that particular region.

2. recalling the commitments of the donor community at the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, donor programs on democratization, rule of law and human rights should be based on a more strategic approach, be of a longer duration aswell as be designed and implemented in a transparent way,

3. business communities should work more closely with governments and civil society organizations in developing and implemlenting improved democratization aid policies and programs;

4. donors should grand civil society organizations more acess to information so as to enable the latter to perform unbiased monitoring of the developing and executing of aid programs

5. donors should support initiatives promoting the creation of, and unhindered acces by citizens to, independent media and information communications technology

6. international multilateral and bilateral programmes of development cooperation should commit on everage 1% of ODA to the promotion of democracy, good governance and human rights.

7. support from international donors for civil society organizations should be provided through direct cooperation relationships where possible

8. development projects affecting indigenous communities require their free, prior and informed consent

e) Plan of Action concerning institutionalizing ICSFD and the ICNRD-led process

1. We welcome the development of the ICNRD-6 (2006) as a full-fledged tripartite process.In this regard, we welcome the joint meeting of representatives of governments parliaments and civil society under the title "Building Democracy from Manila to Doha and follow-up mechanisms" and adoption of the joint final document which would lead to establishment of a tripartite mechanism to carry forward the work of the ICNRD-led process.

2. The ad hoc procedures used by ISC to coordinate its own as well as regional activities need to be properly institutionalized in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of ICSFD as a whole so as to serve as an effective partner of ICNRD and the PF. Therefore we request the next ISC to undertake a study using inter alia, the studies presented to the joint meeting of representatives of governments, parliaments and civil society under the title "Building Democracy from Manila to Doha and follow-up mechanisms" and present its findings and recommendations for consideration and approval at the next ICSFD. The main aim of the study needs to be establishment of effective essential structures to enable ICSFD to achieve its noble aims and mission. Creation of cumbersome bureaucracy needs to be avoided;

3. In order to promote the goals and fulfill the commitments mentioned above, ICSFD needs to build on its past practice, enrich it an strengthen itself organizationally and financially. Pending the outcome of the study mentioned in para. 2 above and adoption of the constitutional mechanism of the forum, ISC is asked to take interim measures, with the minimum required commitment of financial resources, to set up ad hoc essential structures needed to follow-up on the decisions sof ICSFD 2006 and of the ICNRD-led process in general, including coordination within the trilateral partnership.

4. ICSFD asks ISC to undertake consultations with the Chair of ICNRD, United Nations and other interested stakeholders to address the issue of fundraising necessary to promote the ICSFD mission and fulfill the commitments undertaken by ICSFD 2006.

5. Youth and vulnerable groups need to be granted a wider space and consideratiion in the future ICNRD-related events.

VI. Expressions of gratitude

We appreciate the efforts made by the government of Mongolia at ICNRD-5 in promoting further development of the ICNRD process and turning it into a trilateral process that includes parliaments and civil society, which

was supported by the United Nations General Assembly and the newly elected ICNRD chair - the State of Qatar;

We also appreciate the efforts made by the ICSFD International Steering Committee (**ISC** to promote the goals of ICSF-2003 and strengthen the emerging tripartite partnership in support of democracy.

ICSFD expresses its gratitude to Cyril Ritchie and Jakob von Uexkull for making keynote speeches that were sources of insipiration for the participants and contributed greatly to the successful outcome of ICSFD 2006.

We express deep gratitude to the host government of Qatar and its Organizing Committee for supporting in every way the holding of this important forum, other parallel fora and the tripartite joint meeting as well as for making all the necessary arrangements for these to be highly succesfful. ICSFD expresses its readiness to work closely with the incoming ICNRD Chair, his team and the bureau of the Conference in emplementing the decisions taken in Doha by the ICNRD-led movement, and we request that the Government of Qatar circulate the proceedings and the outcome document of ICSFD 2006 as an official document of the United Nations General Assembly and its relevant subsidiary bodies.